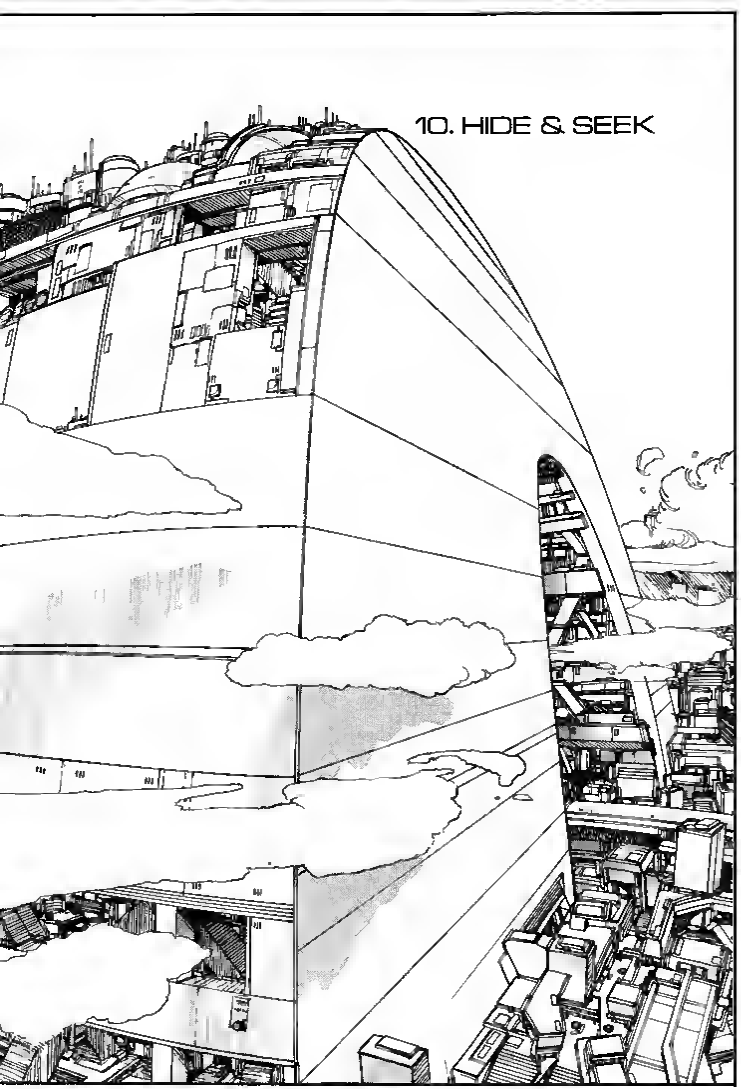
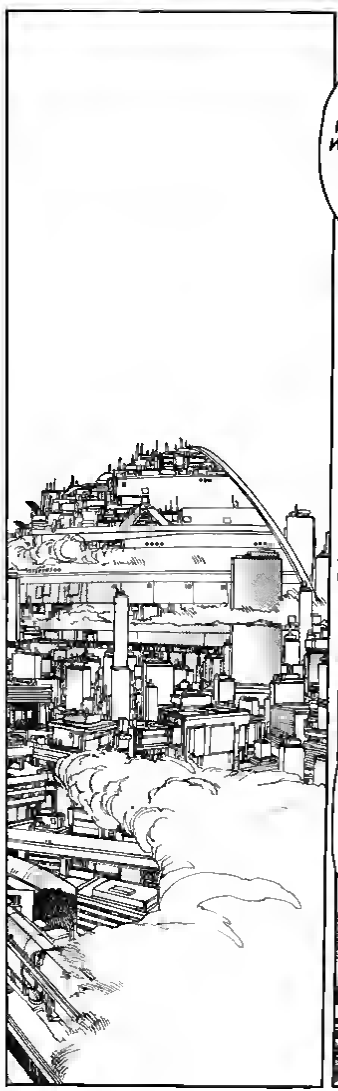
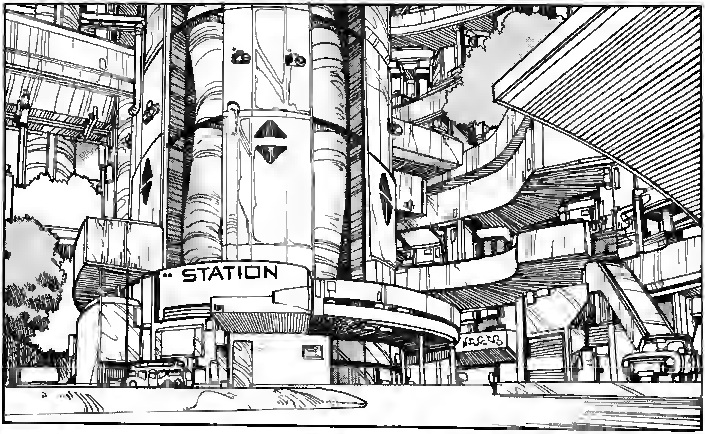
10. HIDE & SEEK





TODAY WE ARE THE WEALTHIEST NATION ON THE PLANET.
THE OLD BELLIGERENTS CONTINUE TO SUFFER FROM STARVATION, FROM THE RAVAGES OF BIOCHEM WEAPONRY, FROM PARALYZED TECHNO-LOGICAL SYSTEMS ..
WHAT'S SHE TALKING ABOUT? TAX HIKE?
THEY ALREADY TAX EVERYTHING IN SIGHT..
TOO MUCH WELFARE CAN BE MISUSED!
BUT JUST LOOK AT THOSE POOR PEOPLE... HOW CAN WE JUST ...
TO HELL WITH GOODS GIVE ME LAND!
I SURE AS HELL DON'T FEEL WEALTHY!
HAH!


STATION

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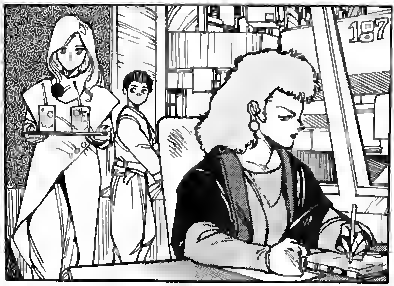
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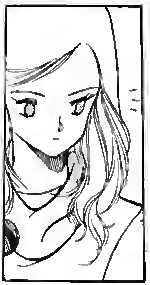

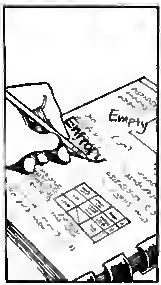
Entry
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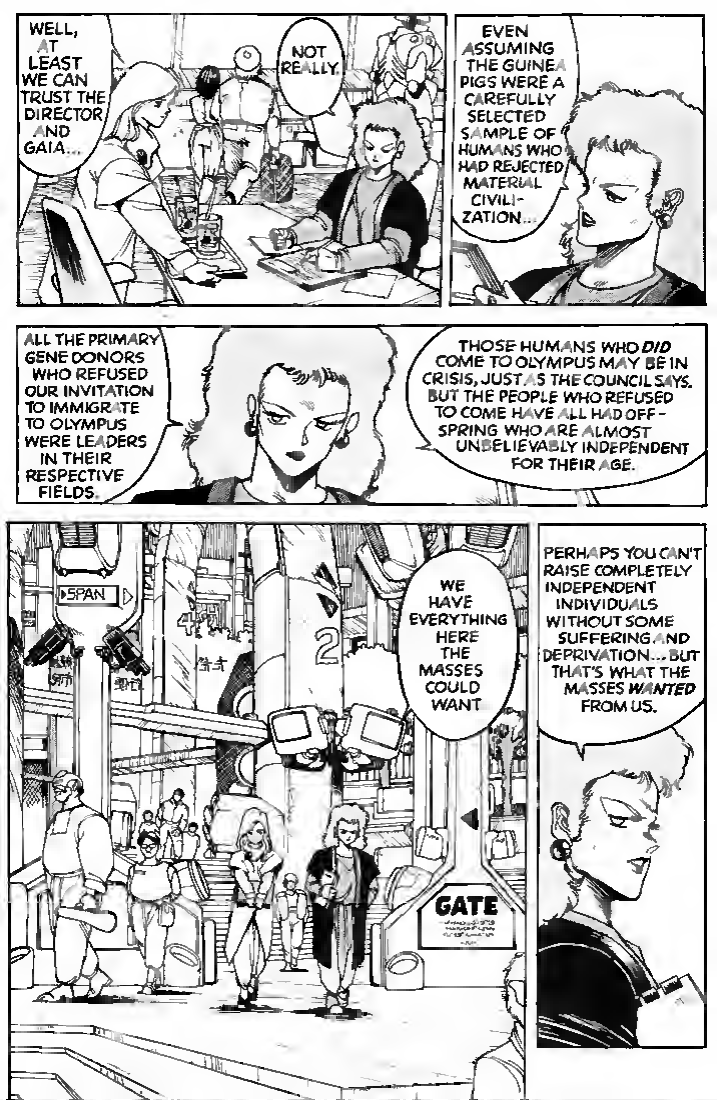
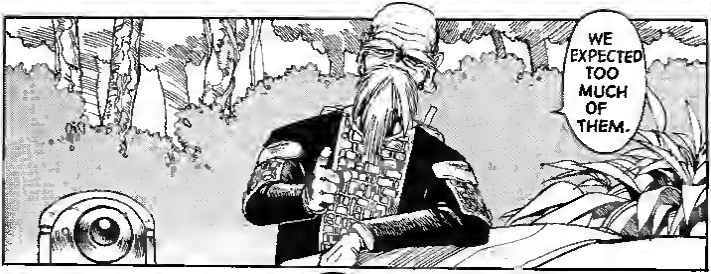
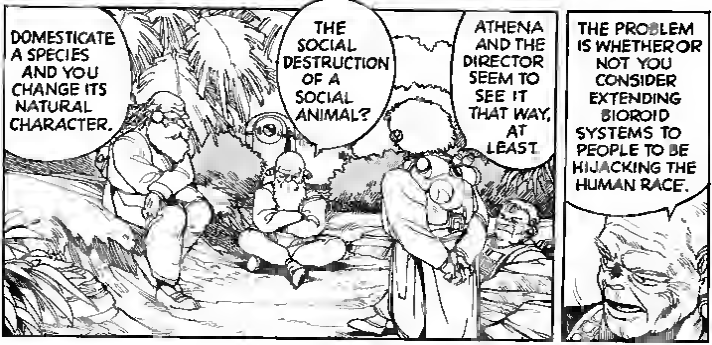
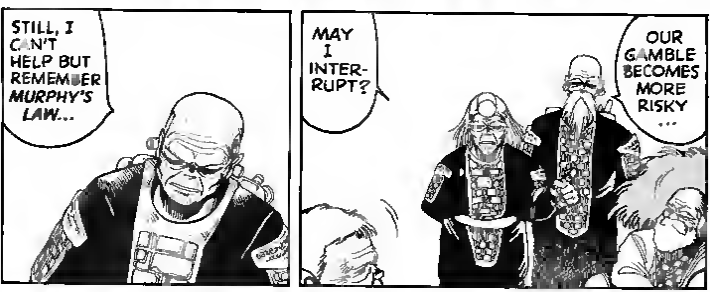

WELL, AT LEAST WE CAN TRUST THE DIRECTOR AND GAIA...
NOT REALLY.
EVEN ASSUMING THE GUINEA PIGS WERE A CAREFULLY SELECTED SAMPLE OF HUMANS WHO HAD REJECTED MATERIAL CIVILIZATION...
ALL THE PRIMARY GENE DONORS WHO REFUSED OUR INVITATION TO IMMIGRATE TO OLYMPUS WERE LEADERS IN THEIR RESPECTIVE FIELDS.
THOSE HUMANS WHO DID COME TO OLYMPUS MAY BE IN CRISIS, JUST AS THE COUNCIL SAYS. BUT THE PEOPLE WHO REFUSED TO COME HAVE ALL HAD OFFSPRING WHO ARE ALMOST UNBELIEVABLY INDEPENDENT FOR THEIR AGE.
SPAN
WE HAVE EVERYTHING HERE THE MASSES COULD WANT
GATE
PERHAPS YOU CAN'T RAISE COMPLETELY INDEPENDENT INDIVIDUALS WITHOUT SOME SUFFERING AND DEPRIVATION... BUT THAT'S WHAT THE MASSES WANTED FROM US.

IF PEOPLE ARE A NATURAL PRODUCT OF THIS PLANET, THEN SO IS THEIR CULTURE, THEIR CIVILIZATION ...THE BREAKDOWN IN THE FOOD CHAIN, THE ENVIRONMENTAL DESTRUCTION, THE OVER-PROTECTION...
AND NOW WHAT WE HAVE AROUND US TODAY--ALL INEVITABLE. MAYBE THIS IS THE WAY IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE ..
BUKOM
THAT'S TOO DETERMINISTIC IF THE COUNCIL'S PROPOSAL PASSES AND THIS BECOMES A BIOROID SOCIETY, THEN MAYBE THAT'S THE WAY IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE, TOO
ARE YOU SUGGESTING THAT THE PRESENT SITUATION IS JUST AN ACCIDENT? THAT THE PEOPLE DON'T REALLY DESIRE IT?
PEOPLE HAVE ALWAYS CHOSEN PATHWAYS THAT LEAD TO DISASTER
BAM!
TO LIVE, OR TO DIE?
THAT'S SOMETHING HUMANS SHOULD BE DECIDING FOR THEMSELVES YET WE GO AHEAD AND..
VRMMM

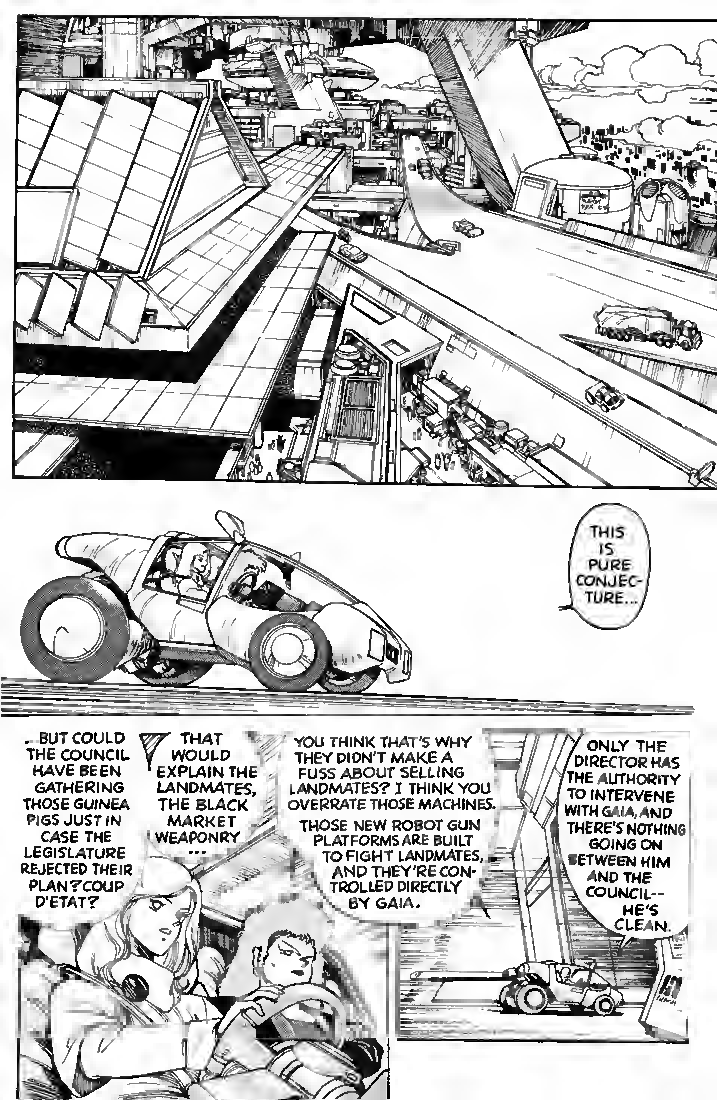

WE EXPECTED TOO MUCH OF THEM.

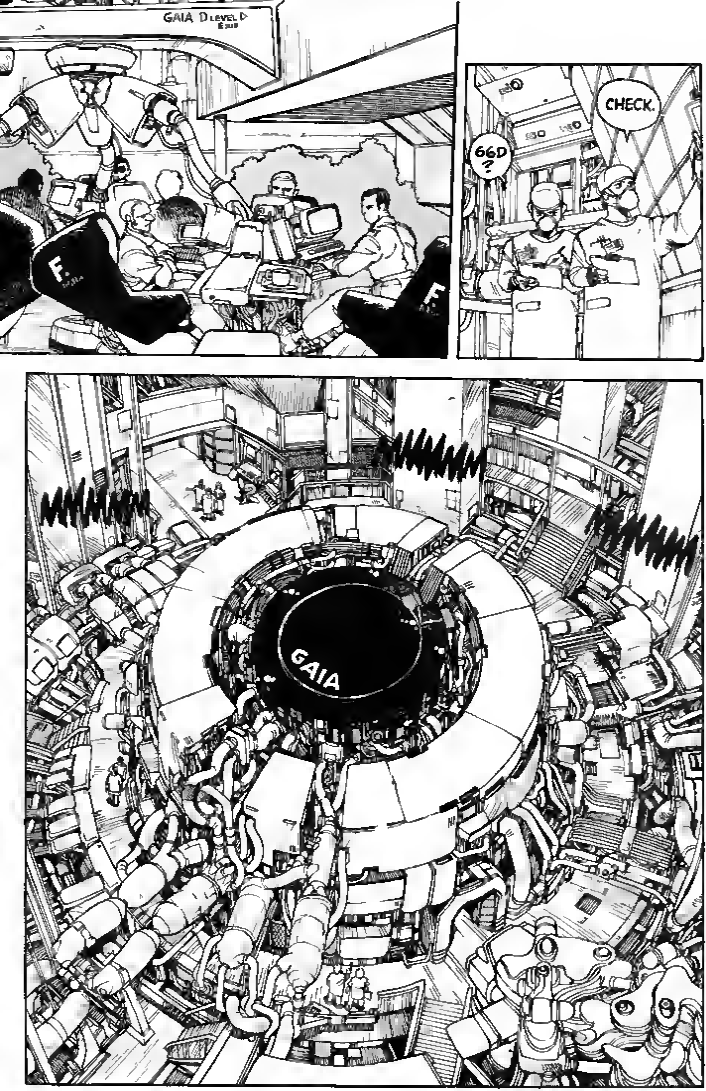

DOMESTICATE A SPECIES AND YOU CHANGE ITS NATURAL CHARACTER.
THE SOCIAL DESTRUCTION OF A SOCIAL ANIMAL?
ATHENA AND THE DIRECTOR SEEM TO SEE IT THAT WAY, AT LEAST.
THE PROBLEM IS WHETHER OR NOT YOU CONSIDER EXTENDING BIOROID SYSTEMS TO PEOPLE TO BE HIJACKING THE HUMAN RACE.

IF WE WERE DIFFERENT SPECIES, MAYBE. BUT WE'RE JUST TRYING TO IMPROVE THE HUMAN RACE.
IN A SENSE, WE'RE MODELS CREATED BY MATERIAL CIVILIZATION. BUT NOW, ALL THESE PEOPLE RUSHING TO DESTRUCTION ARE BECOMING "PROFESSIONAL" HUMANS. OUR PROPOSAL IS THE ONLY WAY TO SAVE THE RACE.

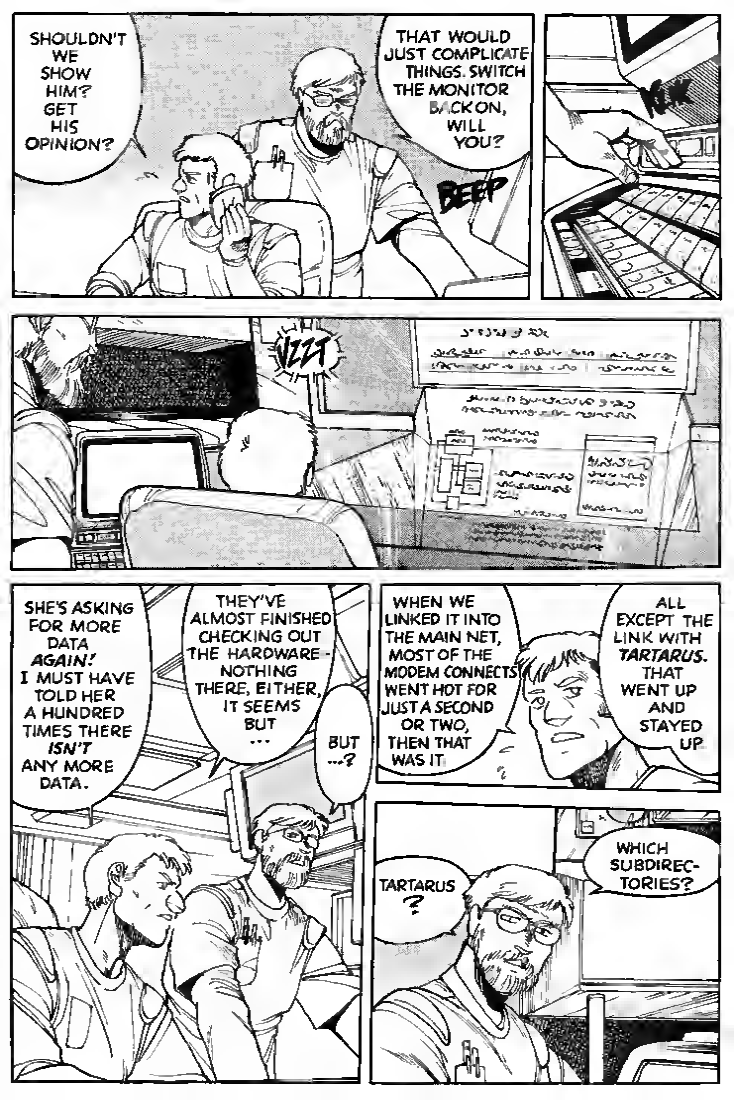

STILL, I CAN'T HELP BUT REMEMBER MURPHY'S LAW...
MAY I INTERRUPT?
OUR GAMBLE BECOMES MORE RISKY ...

WE BIOROIDS WERE CREATED DURING THE INITIAL PLANNING FOR THE OLYMPUS PROJECT BY THE PACIFIST LEADERS OF THE WORLD...
THEY MADE US TO BE RELIABLE, UNIVERSALLY ACCEPTED THIRD PARTIES IN HUMAN DISPUTES, INVESTED WITH ABSOLUTE TRUST. MOREOVER... GAIA WAS BUILT TO BE AN IMPARTIAL MEDIATOR BETWEEN HUMANS AND BIOROIDS.
BUT NO COMPUTER CAN REPLICATE STILL UNKNOWN PORTIONS OF THE HUMAN CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM-- AND THAT'S WHY WE SEVEN WERE SELECTED TO PUT BEHIND US THE INDIVIDUALITY AND POSSESSIVENESS OF NORMAL LIFEFORMS AND FUNCTION AS GAIA'S CENTRAL CPU.
AND THE DIRECTOR'S GOING TO HAVE GAIA JUDGE OUR PROPOSAL ...!
!!
WITHOUT US?!
THAT TOTALLY OBJECTIVE, TOTALLY UNBIASED, TOTALLY IRRESPONSIBLE POCKET CALCULATOR ?!
ME? THEY ASKED FOR ME?
YES'M.
G-GEE? YOU DON'T THINK MAYBE I'VE GOT SOME LATENT SUPER-POWER, huh...?
OH BOY OH BOY OH BOY !
MORE LIKELY BECAUSE NOBODY EVER NOTICES YOU, I BET.
EEP!
I DON'T LIKE THE LOOK OF THIS-- I'M COMING WITH YOU.


THIS IS PURE CONJEC-TURE...
ONLY THE DIRECTOR HAS THE AUTHORITY TO INTERVENE WITH GAIA, AND THERE'S NOTHING GOING ON BETWEEN HIM AND THE COUNCIL-- HE'S CLEAN.
YOU THINK THAT'S WHY THEY DIDN'T MAKE A FUSS ABOUT SELLING LANDMATES? I THINK YOU OVERRATE THOSE MACHINES.
THOSE NEW ROBOT GUN PLATFORMS ARE BUILT TO FIGHT LANDMATES, AND THEY'RE CONTROLLED DIRECTLY BY GAIA.
THAT WOULD EXPLAIN THE LANDMATES, THE BLACK MARKET WEAPONRY ...
...BUT COULD THE COUNCIL HAVE BEEN GATHERING THOSE GUINEA PIGS JUST IN CASE THE LEGISLATURE REJECTED THEIR PLAN? COUP D'ETAT?


GAIA D LEVEL D
CHECK.
66D ?
GAIA

GAIA
A
LEVEL
MONITOR
Rigid Internal Codes Exclusively Rule Computers & Robots!
HOW'S IT GOING? ANY PROBLEMS?
Hmm? Oh, NO, NO.
IT'S BEEN A NIGHTMARE CONFIRMING THE COUNCIL'S DATA.
THEIR TERMINOLOGY'S AMBIGUOUS AND WE HAVE TO BACKTRACK TO MAKE SURE THE INITIAL STUDIES WERE THOROUGH AND ERROR-FREE
WE'VE BEEN GOING BACK TO ALL THE SOURCES THAT PROVIDED THE ORIGINAL DATA AND WE'VE GOT A SPECIAL INVESTIGATIVE TEAM WORKING IN PARALLEL WITH US THEN THERE'S GAIA HERSELF. SHE'S REALLY TAKING HER TIME.
WELL, IT CAN'T BE HELPED.
LET ME KNOW THE MINUTE YOU GET SOMETHING SOLID.
YES, SIR
.....
.....
BEEP
MMMM

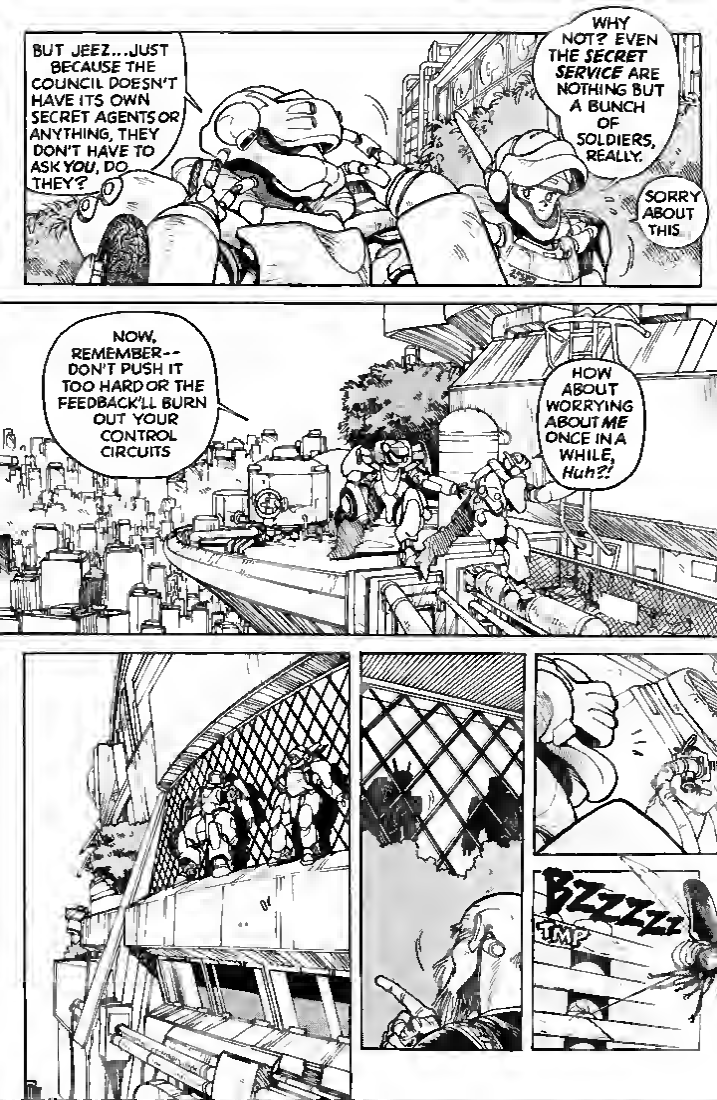

SHOULDN'T WE SHOW HIM? GET HIS OPINION?
THAT WOULD JUST COMPLICATE THINGS. SWITCH THE MONITOR BACK ON, WILL YOU?
BEEP
CLICK
IZZT
SHE'S ASKING FOR MORE DATA AGAIN! I MUST HAVE TOLD HER A HUNDRED TIMES THERE ISN'T ANY MORE DATA.
THEY'VE ALMOST FINISHED CHECKING OUT THE HARDWARE - NOTHING THERE, EITHER, IT SEEMS BUT ...
BUT ...?
WHEN WE LINKED IT INTO THE MAIN NET, MOST OF THE MODEM CONNECTS WENT HOT FOR JUST A SECOND OR TWO, THEN THAT WAS IT.
ALL EXCEPT THE LINK WITH TARTARUS. THAT WENT UP AND STAYED UP.
TARTARUS ?
WHICH SUBDIRECTORIES?

THE WHOLE SHEBANG-- BIOROID DESIGN, EARLY CHILDHOOD, TRAINING, EDUCATION, RIGHT THROUGH TO THE GRAVE.
ANYTHING IN PARTICULAR..?
Huh? Ah, NO.. THEY JUST SEEM TO HAVE BEEN TALKING TOGETHER.
?
GAIA
A LEVEL
I THOUGHT IF WE DISCONNECT THE GAIA SUBSYSTEM THAT'S BEEN WORKING IN PARALLEL WITH THE MAIN UNIT, WE COULD AT LEAST ACCESS AN INDEX OF WHAT THEY'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT.
MAYBE WE REALLY SHOULD TELL THE DIRECTOR ...
IT COULD JUST BE A HARDWARE GLITCH --NO POINT IN ADDING TO HIS WORRIES WITH A HALF-BAKED INTERIM REPORT
IF THE DATA'S INSUFFICIENT, THAT'S AN ANSWER IN ITSELF, ANYWAY.
GAIA
YEAH, YEAH GUESS YOU'RE RIGHT.
I'LL SUGGEST THEY LAY OFF THE TALK AND GET TO WORK.
TAK TAK
TAKATAK
TK'TK
TAKKATAK
NOW PROCESSING IMPORTANT PROBLEM. WAIT.
MORE DATA ?
IS . . IS THIS WHAT THEY MEAN BY "COMPUTER REVOLT"...?
DON'T BE ABSURD!
TRY AGAIN USE AN ALPHA LEVEL COMMAND FORM

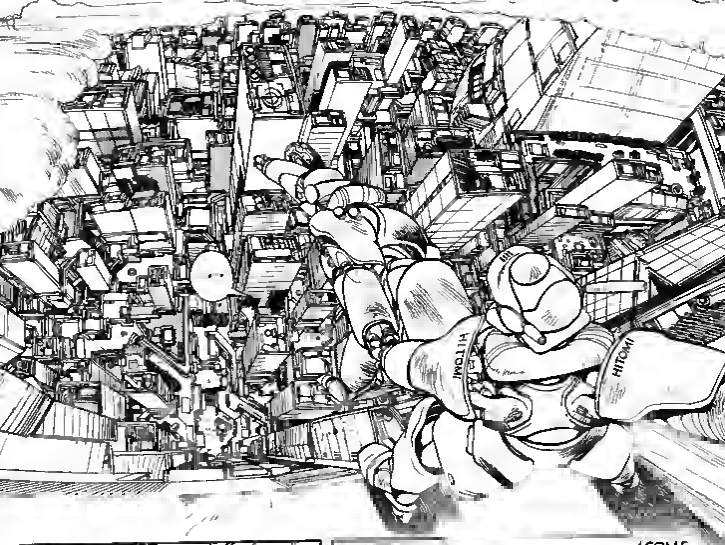
AND JUST WHY CAN'T WE ENTER?
YOU MAY BE THE ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR, MA'AM, BUT ORDERS ARE ORDERS.
I'M SURE YOU UNDERSTAND OUR POSITION, MA'AM.
GAIA
A
LOC
MONITOR
I JUST WANT TO LOOK.
YOU CAN ASSIGN US A GUARD, IF YOU WISH.
WE'LL HAVE TO FRISK YOU, MA'AM, AND SIX OF MY MEN GO WITH YOU.
JUST WAIT A MINUTE, PLEASE.
I'LL BE MOST COOPERATIVE, I ASSURE YOU ...
WHAT? NOW ATHENA'S HERE?
BETTER CUT THE MONITOR AGAIN-- CAN'T PLAY FAVORITES
ONCE THEY LEAVE, TRY AGAIN WITH A PRIORITY OVERRIDE CODE. IF THAT STILL DOESN'T DO IT, SHUT THEM DOWN MANUALLY AND WE'LL RUN A BUG HUNT. SUBSYSTEM ONE CAN HANDLE THE SHOW.
GOT YOU

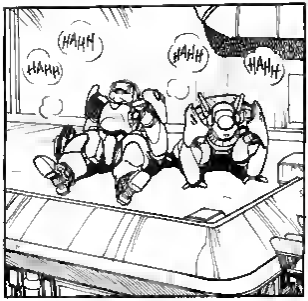
Hiii!!
YOU ALL LOOK SO GLOOMY! COME ON, EVERYBODY-SMILE, SMILE!
Heh, heh, heh
WHAT'S GOING ON?
LATER, LATER COME OVER HERE.
THIS IS SO... SO INTENSE...
"WE'RE BEING MONITORED--READ SILENTLY"...?

SO WHAT DID THE REPORT SAY?
"GO TO GAIA." THAT'S ALL, REALLY.
GAIA? ISN'T THAT THE COMPUTER THAT RUNS THE TRAFFIC LIGHTS AND CONTROLS THE FREEWAYS?
YOSHI
TOMI
IT FIGURES YOU WOULD THINK OF *THAT*, RATHER THAN ELECTRICITY, OR WATER, OR GAS — OR *POLITICS*, EVEN! GAIA'S PROGRAMMING THOSE NEW ROBOT PLATFORMS, YOU KNOW.
..AND THAT'S WHAT WE'VE GOT TO STOP IT FROM DOING PHYSICALLY, IF NECESSARY.
WHY?
I DUNNO.
SO WE'RE SUPPOSED TO PICK UP THIS MEMORY BANK OR WHATEVER IT IS *OUTSIDE* THE DETENTION CELL?
KACHAK
OF COURSE! IF THEY'D GIVEN IT TO ME INSIDE, I'D NEVER HAVE GOT IT PAST THE GUARDS, WOULD I?

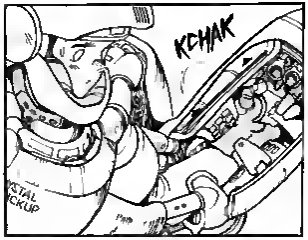

BUT JEEZ... JUST BECAUSE THE COUNCIL DOESN'T HAVE ITS OWN SECRET AGENTS OR ANYTHING, THEY DON'T HAVE TO ASK YOU, DO THEY?
WHY NOT? EVEN THE SECRET SERVICE ARE NOTHING BUT A BUNCH OF SOLDIERS, REALLY.
SORRY ABOUT THIS
NOW, REMEMBER-- DON'T PUSH IT TOO HARD OR THE FEEDBACK'LL BURN OUT YOUR CONTROL CIRCUITS
HOW ABOUT WORRYING ABOUT ME ONCE IN A WHILE, Huh?!
BZZZZZ
TMP

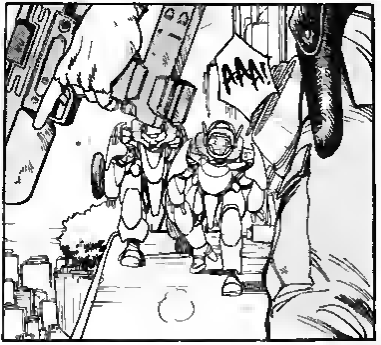
SO ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS PLUG THIS IN THE RIGHT PLACE ...?
DAMN WIND
WHAT'S THIS ?!
"IF UNABLE TO RESET THE MEMORY BANK WITHIN TWO HOURS, BREAK INTO AN 'H' BLOCK AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE AND FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS THERE"
FWAP
PONK
WHAT ?!
!
CHAK


HITOM!
HITOM!


HAHH
HAHH
HAHH
HAHH

WAHH! YOU MASHED MY LANDMATE'S LITTLE FINGERS!!
COME ON... WE BETTER MOVE.


KCHAK
METAL PICK-UP


AAA!

FREEZE !!
KLIK
YOU HEARD THE MAN.
DEU
DEUNA?!
HAVEN'T WE DONE THIS BEFORE? POP THAT ARMOR, NICE AND SLOW.
IF YOU DON'T, I'LL PUT A BULLET THROUGH YOUR HEAD.
BUT WHA -
D-DON'T MOVE! SHE'LL REALLY DO IT!!

WHAT CHOICE HAVE WE GOT? GRAB THE HOOK ON MY BACK..!
KCHNK
WHA?!
HEY!!
DON'T KILL THEM! AIM FOR THE LEGS!
VRMMMM
YO-YOSHI ... Ouch!
WHOO
SKREEEEEE
YOU OKAY?!
FHK
ALERT B SQUAD! HEY, YOU... WHA--!
GIVE ME A BACK-UP!

DAMN YOU!! WHERE ARE YOU GOING ?!
DOWN !!
BMMMMM
GODDAMN IT--WE'RE SLIPPING!
REEE
YOSHI, I BIT MY TONGUE!!
VRMM
SO WHAT !!
UMPH!

KRAK
Hngg!
DEUNAN!
KITOMI

YOU STUPID IDIOTS!!
DID YOU REALLY THINK YOU COULD GET AWAY?!
THAT'S WHY I CAN'T STAND AMATEURS!
YOU ARE GODDAMN LUCKY YOU RAN INTO MY SQUAD FIRST..
THOSE OTHER GUYS DON'T GIVE A SHIT ABOUT BLOWING OFF AN ARM OR LEG!
DEU...
I'VE PAID MY DEBT TO YOU.
BY THE POWER VESTED IN ME AS AN OFFICER OF ESWAT, I PLACE YOU BOTH UNDER ARREST!
HANDS WHERE I CAN SEE THEM! SLOWLY!
GET ME THE CHIEF!
HEY! STOP BENDING IT LIKE THAT! YOU'LL WRECK THE BEARING, JEEZ!
WHAT THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU WERE PLAYING AT?! HOT FOR A PROMOTION OR SOMETHING?!
KRAK
YOU'RE SUSPENDED FROM DUTY! GO BACK TO SCHOOL AND LEARN SOMETHING THIS TIME!
AKECHI MOTORS

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